

NYS IPM Project Annual Report

Project Title: Improving Field Crop Extension outreach through enhanced growing season outreach

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Report Fiscal Year: 2011

Impact Summary

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) educators are Cornell University's front line in helping New York field crop producer clientele with crop production and pest management issues. Keeping CCE personnel informed on the latest information and developments helps us meet Cornell's high standards for extension outreach and provides clientele with quality, pertinent, timely and user-friendly programs and resources that maximize our educational impacts. Enhancing communication opportunities between CCE county and campus personnel helps strengthen the outreach network, and is an important component of CCE's professional development. 2011 marked the fourth year for this project. A series of thirteen conference calls were held weekly to improve campus and field staff communication regarding field crop pest and crop management issues during the growing season. Each call averaged approximately 8 - 10 participants and lasted forty-five minutes. Conference call participants were better equipped to conduct their outreach efforts and meet the field crop pest management needs of their stakeholder. Summaries of pest observations and follow up articles were included in the NYS IPM Program On-line newsletter the Weekly Pest Report. Articles from this newsletter were used in many CCE county and regional newsletters reaching an estimated 27,000 subscribers.

Issue

County and regional Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) field crop educators are Cornell University's front line in helping New York field crop producer clientele with crop production and pest management issues. Keeping CCE personnel informed on the latest information and developments helps us meet Cornell's high standards for extension outreach and provides clientele with quality, pertinent, timely and user-friendly programs and resources that maximize our educational impacts. Regular communication between CCE county and campus personnel helps strengthen the outreach network, and is an important component of CCE's professional development. CCE personnel translate knowledge gained from these educational opportunities into outreach materials and other resources to effectively meet needs of clientele.

Integral to regular communication and team building is an open exchange of information between individuals with varying levels of experience. Seasoned experts are able to help new extension personnel gain a statewide perspective of production issues and opportunities in real time. Regular dialogues provide a forum for review and discussion of new information and technologies, including strengths, weaknesses, and advantages of adoption. Frequent communication assures our unified vision and strengthens our consistent outreach message. These exchanges are often instrumental in helping to identify applied research needs, local demonstration opportunities, and the development of outreach resources / programs.

Response

This conference call series was initiated in 2008 and funded through a Smith-Lever Grant from CCE. The original grant support continued through 2010. Conference calls during the 2011 season were not externally funded, however, participant interest remained high and the program was self funded by participants. A series of thirteen conference calls were held weekly (May 12–Oct. 27) in 2011 to improve campus and field staff communication regarding field crop pest and crop management issues during the growing season. Each 45-minute conference call involved CCE field crop educators and faculty sharing information updates on statewide observations of crop growth/development, pest status and selected pest management and other topics.

Conference calls were open to all CCE personnel with field crop responsibilities. A total of 15 CCE educators participated over the course of the 2011 growing season with approximately 8 - 10 extension educators with field crop and general agriculture responsibilities participated per meeting. The conference call series provided CCE personnel the opportunity to share current statewide field observations and discuss questions and management recommendations. Meeting activities and agenda included: participant introductions, weekly weather outlook, discussion of county and statewide pest observations and crop growth and development, and other selected pest management topics. Meetings concluded with a special topic presentation or suggested IPM activities for week. Links and supplemental information discussed during the conference call were shared with participants via follow up email. Statewide updates, observations and topics discussed were generally highlighted in that week's Weekly Pest Report newsletter.

Impact

The objective of this effort was to improve the timely statewide communication of pest management and crop production among field crop CCE personnel during the growing season.

As in previous years (2008-2010) of field crop conference call implementation, CCE personnel with field crop responsibilities took advantage of the weekly opportunity to share observations, gain insights, acquire and present practical knowledge and technical information in an in-house professional development environment. These timely efforts enhanced field crop extension personnel (educators and faculty) communication and awareness on current pest and crop conditions. In addition, the timely forum allowed for discussion of anticipated pest, crop and weather issues, integrated pest and crop management and potential extension programming opportunities. The majority of those involved were repeat participants each year with new extension field staff joining in the discussions with more experienced field staff. Nearly 25 individuals regularly participated and contributed to the effort and it's success over its four-year duration. Participants found value in the timely updates, discussion, professional development and team building aspects of the conference calls that could then be used to increase potential extension outreach impacts with stakeholders. As an indication of this usefulness, the 2011 season conference calls were supported by individual participants without outside funding.

The primary benefit of the program lies in the enhanced communication and professional development of the extension personnel involved. Stakeholders ultimately benefit from this effort through the potential enhanced extension outreach impacts related to increased timely awareness of pest issues, pre-emptive monitoring and management of potential pest problems that help grower stakeholders minimize or avoid pest impacts, better address pesticide use decisions, and protect net profitability.

Topics this season included: wetter than normal weather conditions in the early season delaying planting and other field activities, a July drought in many areas. Major topics and activities: tracking wheat growth / development / disease incidence, early season crop emergence and weed control issues, very low incidence of alfalfa weevil, PLH, and soybean aphid; identification and management of white mold in soybean, slugs in corn & soybeans, crow damage to emerging corn, soybean vein necrosis virus (first occurrence). Detailed discussions of brown marmorated stink bug activities, fusarium head blight prediction model, mid to late season corn weed management, western bean cutworm monitoring risk to sweet and field corn and dry bean, soybean white mold management, weed management recommendations and decision making, vertebrate damage to field crops, sharing of timely resources and field monitoring reminders. Weekly weather outlook and pest observations were summarized in the Field Crop IPM Weekly Pest Report (<http://nysipm.cornell.edu/fieldcrops/tag/pestrpt/>). The intended audience for this newsletter includes field crop producers, CCE personnel, crop advisors, agricultural industry, and others. Direct and multiplier effect through distribution in newsletters, by radio, at meetings and other venues estimated at 16,500. The Weekly Pest Report had 2,373 web hits in 2011.

2011 conference calls averaged 8 - 10 participants per conference call with active participation and contributions by Gary Bergstrom (Cornell plant pathologist) and Russ Hahn (Cornell weed scientist). Entire CCE FCrop list serve invited to participate, 15 different CCE educators participated this season. End of program evaluations were very positive.

CCE personnel could easily transform knowledge and insights gained from conference call discussions into direct outreach to local stakeholders resulting in improvements in cost effective and environmentally sound pest management decision-making.

Plans for 2012: A Smith-Lever CCE grant to continue the Weekly Field crop Pest Conference call Series has been secured for the 2012 - 2014 seasons. The 2012 effort would strive to increase the number of participants, incorporate more use of Adobe Connect collaboration software for training purposes and invited presentations by subject matter specialists.